

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES - HUMAN SERVICES**

### **Town of Eastham Goals and Performance Standards**

This section has been prepared by the Eastham Human Services Advisory Committee for incorporation into the Local Comprehensive Plan.

- 4.6 Goal:** It is the goal of the Human Services Advisory Committee to enhance the lives of all Eastham residents. The Town must continue to be a desirable place to live, to raise a family, and spend the later retirement years. The Protection of the environment and economic improvement of the Town and its inhabitants, especially meeting the needs of our citizens in financial and other difficulties, is essential. To that end support must be given to social agencies, volunteer services and strengthened Town programs.

### **Existing Conditions**

According to the 2000 census there are 5,453 residents in 2,396 households. Six hundred and ten of these households were composed of persons living alone, and 568 households included children under 18. One hundred and twenty nine of the households with children were headed by single mothers. Another 44 households contained children living with other relatives than their own parents. The median age of Eastham residents is 47.6 years. There are 5,535 housing units in Eastham, according to the 2000 census, of which 2,893 are listed as seasonal, recreational or for occasional use.

Eastham has been jolted with many changes in the past ten years and the welfare, health and quality of life for our residents have been heavily impacted. These changes are actually the continuation of trends apparent in past years. By 1999 the conditions fostered by these patterns had reached the point where they could no longer be ignored. The town has been concerned with increases in population, loss of rural character, damaging traffic, protection of open space and our natural resources, the loss of young families, and insufficient affordable housing for young workers. The human service needs of our people add another dimension to the situation. While we speak here of the service needs, other sections of the Comprehensive Plan must deal with amelioration of the factors which contribute to problems facing our residents. Economic issues are pervasive.

The Eastham community has seen a large increase in the number of older retirees as permanent residents and of second homes owned by non residents, with a corresponding decrease in the number of households with children. The financial “good times” of the 90’s largely benefited those in the upper income levels, while creating additional pressures on residents with moderate and lower incomes. Their income has not kept up with the sharply rising cost of living. The erratic nature of employment in this area, especially related to the large seasonal cycle, whether in the service, retail, tourism, or fishing industry segments of the employment spectrum is an additional impact. Combining 2 or 3 part time jobs has often been the rule for survival for many

families on the outer cape. The decline of the fishing industry also took its toll; while carpenter and landscape work picked up; these jobs are also sporadic and offer few if any benefits.

The community has been seriously affected by the lack of affordable housing. Affluent times meant that many people were able to afford second homes, and enabled retirees, often those who had treasured annual vacations here, to choose the Cape and its lifestyle. As a result, build-out continued to increase, land and house prices escalated, putting home ownership out of reach for many. Rental housing also was lost as landlords were able to sell at top dollar to second home buyers, and rents increased reflecting the shortage. This situation is making it more difficult to recruit teachers, health professionals and others working in the public sector. Business also feels the pinch since housing is scarce for summer workers as well as full time staff.

At the same time, the cost of living continues to rise beyond average incomes. A statewide survey of what it costs to live, county by county, in 1997, found that it requires an annual income of \$35,890 to support a single parent with 2 children living on the outer cape. Basic expenses included are the cost of housing, child care, food, health care and transportation. For a 2 parent family with 2 children, the income needed was close to \$45,000. This requires a job earning around \$17.00 an hour for the 3 person family, and close to \$10 each for the 2 parent four person family. In 2002, 5 years later, the cost of living is even higher.

Taxes and utility costs continue to creep up. This affects our older residents, especially retirees on fixed incomes, as well as those families raising children. The income of two parents is now even more important to making ends meet. The pressures on the single parent dependent on one income are very heavy. A major expense is the cost of maintaining a car which is essential to employment and reaching other essential services. Some residents must choose between paying the electric bill or fixing the car. While there have been some improvements in public transportation, and more emphasis on the problem, reliance on personal cars is still necessary.

Health costs also have risen. The increased cost of prescription medicines and the escalating rates of health insurance have affected many families. Employers have had to drop such plans or raise the employees' contribution enormously. Dental care is beyond the reach of many, and, because all but one cape dentist refused to accept Medicaid benefits, was totally unavailable for children and others on Mass Health until the creation of the Ellen Jones Dental Clinic in Harwich in 2000. That clinic has had to close its waiting list and is vulnerable to the budget cuts in the wake of the economic downturn and state tax reductions.

The requests for help in finding housing continue to increase. Requests come from young families and also older residents who have lost their housing because it was sold to new owners. According to the 2000 census reports, about 50 rental units were lost while the growth in home ownership increased. A number of families are now seeking help with mortgage payments in order to keep their homes. When prices rise generally, illness strikes or the car dies, what was once an affordable mortgage payment becomes problematic. Requests have increased for emergency help with food and utility bills. The Eastham food pantry enables families to stretch the food budget and use available funds for other essentials.

Counseling and mental health services have always helped individuals and families with the stress and strains of daily life, including difficult relationships, children's adjustment problems, coping with illness, and the more serious episodes of mental illness and depression. Domestic violence is no stranger to Eastham, nor is drug and alcohol abuse. The 2000 Annual Report of the Police Department listed 53 service incidents related to domestic problems. The economic pressures and threat to housing add to the stresses for which our residents seek help. These problems are hidden from public view, and it is hoped that the new edition of the County of Barnstable study of The Human Condition will provide us with greater understanding of the extent of these problems.

### Children

Slightly more than seventeen percent (17.3%) of the population is under 18 years of age, as compared to 20% in 1990. This is reflected in lower school enrollment, particularly in the early grades but can be seen moving up into middle and high school levels. As of January 2002 there are 265 children registered in the Eastham elementary school. The birthrate in Eastham continues below that of the late 80's and early 90's, and the young adult population is decreasing as well. Young families move out for more affordable homes; fewer young families can afford the rising housing costs and lack of rental opportunities.

Financial problems fall heavily on the child-raising generation. Twenty-four percent of the children attending Eastham elementary school qualify for free or reduced cost breakfast and lunch. Furthermore, one quarter of the households with children under 18 are single parent households. Family support services, helpful to all families, are especially needed by these families.

As noted, increases in the number of working mothers and the needs of single parent families means that child care has become a service of critical importance to the community. Day care, after school care and summer programs are high priorities.

Children's Place, opening in 1996 now provides day care for children from 16 months through 4 years with a sliding scale fee. Some state funded vouchers are available. More applicants could be served if there was enough space. Two of the 4 licensed family day care providers in Eastham were closed in 2001. Family care is the major resource for the youngest children and one of the closed programs was the only one which provided care from birth to 5. One of the closed programs was the only one which provided care from birth to 3 years. Care is least available and most expensive for that age group.

An after school program is operated at the elementary school by the Eastham Committee on Early Childhood. Because this program is dependent upon user fees of a constantly shifting parental group for continuity and stability, it faces many difficulties.

While there is a town-operated recreation program at the high school for mornings only, there is now no organized summer program for school age children available for working parents.

Several new and innovative programs are now available for Eastham families. Children's Place has received state and federal grants for valued parent support programming, including education for childbirth, home visits and a variety of discussion and support groups. Children's Place also provides a comprehensive referral service for families. The organization also administers federal and state grant programs which provide vouchers for child care for eligible families, but more financial aid is needed.

An additional but limited resource for preschool care has been the development of the federally mandated program for integrated Preschool Programs for children with disabilities. These programs are also required to include children without disabilities so that a portion of the placements are also available for non-disabled children on a sliding scale fee basis. Children with disabilities are also eligible for necessary services from birth under the Early Intervention program. This is a very important program, especially since technology now enables the survival of more infants born with very serious disabilities.

Unfortunately the Head Start program for poverty level families which some Eastham children attended in Wellfleet has been closed. This federal program also provided these most at-risk families with such necessary supports as advocacy, health and nutrition services. Transportation issues make it very difficult for Eastham children to attend the nearest center in Brewster.

We are aware that there are families struggling with significant problems and in need of very special supports. An indication is the fact that some Eastham children are brought to the attention of the Department of Social Services upon suspicion of neglect or abuse. Thirty-eight children in Eastham were brought to the attention of authorities in 1996 and sixty children in 1997. The allegations in twenty-four cases in 1996 and in twenty-seven cases in 1997 were found to be verified upon investigation, although it should be realized that investigations can not always be completed within the time frame of an annual report. Often the investigation discloses substantial need for help, even when serious neglect or abuse cannot be proven.

The needs of our teen age youth require special attention. There are many concerns, including alienation from the community, the rise in violence in response to disputes, and the use of alcohol and drugs. In another generation, fist fights settled the score, but in today's climate weapons are more commonplace and a police officer is assigned to daily duty in our regional high school in Eastham. Along with carrying out law enforcement duties, the activities of this officer go beyond deterrence, but also provide a positive influence. Factors leading to antisocial youth behavior are varied, and include the effects of the media, the economic problems besetting families, family issues of alcohol and abuse.

Many constructive actions already have taken place in recent years. We have seen the Field of Dreams become a reality as a result of volunteer actions, and there is pride in the resulting growth of sports activities for children and youth. The town has created the position of Director of Recreation to oversee meeting the needs of the total population. The town has also supported the Juice Bar in Orleans which serves as a regional teen center. Our schools also provide a range of sports and other activities for youth.

Eastham is a small town of caring people and this is an important advantage in our efforts to help. Eastham must continue to use its resources to develop teen age programs within our town that use the energy and talents of this group in constructive activity. Mentoring is one example of a program which promotes one to one adult/youth relationships that can be effective in integrating youth into the life of the community. We recommend that a Children and Youth Council be formed with representation from both public and private groups serving children and youth and include as well interested individuals. Many organizations now offer activities for children and teens and their parents and such a Council could also play an important role in coordinating existing efforts, defining needs and gaps in service and developing greater awareness of opportunities.

### The Elder Population

The number of residents over 65 continues to grow. While the decade between 1980 and 1990 saw a 51% increase, the trend continues, but is less dramatic. The major increase has been in the proportion of residents 75 and older. There was a 44% increase between 1990 and 2000. . There are now 629 residents in that group, compared to 354 in 1990. The median age is now 47.6, as compared to 41.7 in 1990. We note also that 12.4 % of Eastham households are composed of residents 65 and over who are living alone.

The presence of this large retirement age group in Eastham is of great benefit to the town.: Our older residents bring varied life experiences and skills and the desire to share their expertise with the town. This extensive volunteer “workforce” is indispensable and in fact makes us strong. At the same time we must plan for the effects of age and frailty as life progresses.

Our Council on Aging provides a wealth of activities to meet varied interests and to stimulate our older residents as well as offering a social connecting point. There is a program to meet every interest- and as interests grow, so does the program! Elder Services of Cape Cod, the channel for federal programming for older Americans, offers major supports, particularly the nutrition program through the auspices of the COA. Other not-for profit groups such as Legal Services, Sight Loss and the Council on Alcoholism meet with our residents monthly at the Council’s Center. In addition Consumers Assistance provides printed information on wise buying, avoiding fraud and scams, and has an information line available on a daily basis. Of particular interest is the Social Day Program for those who need this opportunity for socialization, and for those whose activity is limited by physical or other problems.

The Council on Aging also assists with one of the major needs of our residents, whether elderly or not, and helps connect those requiring home care for temporary or longer times with home helpers. Restrictive regulations imposed on medicare services has limited the availability of such care seriously and the cost of help provided through private agencies is prohibitive expensive for many. This need for personal care assistance, chore service, house maintenance and even nursing care will increase particularly as the over 75 population grows larger.

Social isolation is becoming a greater issue for the elderly. As noted earlier, almost 300 residents age 65 and over live alone. Isolation occurs even when people live in households with others. Both physical care and mental acuity suffer, and depression can overtake the person. Obviously

safety is a big concern. However, the lack of transportation makes it impossible for the isolated to attend the stimulating programs that are offered at the Senior Center. Many elderly continue to drive even though their ability to do so safely has decreased. This is an area for town attention. Recommendations have been made for the development of a volunteer escort service, similar to the Meals on Wheels program.

Transportation continues to be a major problem for the elderly, especially because we live in a semi-rural area where public transportation is essentially limited to bus routes on Rte 6 from Provincetown to Hyannis 2 or 3 times a day. The B-bus is very helpful, but there are problems with scheduling and frequency of service. Fortunately some improvements have meant that it is possible to get shuttle service from the Plymouth Brockton bus to the hospital in Hyannis, and there are newer efforts to join the towns in a limited service to hospital appointments in Boston. There is hope for the future in the Transportation Task Force plans announced in the fall of 2000. In the meantime, local effort to meet local needs must be expanded.

Health care is also a paramount issue for the elderly, made more complicated by the need for transportation and the increasing cost. We can expect an increase in problems as retirement programs increase co-payments and even drop medical benefits from their plans. HMOS continue to either increase monthly premiums, or leave the cap altogether. The exorbitant cost of prescription drugs places many in a crisis situation and particularly affects the elderly.

Many financial issues impact the elderly in their retirement years. Rising costs including food, medicine, taxes, transportation play havoc with financial plans that were solid when first made. Tax abatement provisions are very helpful, but don't meet all problems. Some of our older retirees are living on limited social security benefits alone. There comes a time when cutting back is impossible, and there is no way to meet emergencies. It is time for the town to work with the Council on Aging and its outreach program to determine, if possible, the extent of the problems in this area.

As our over 75 population grows, we will need to give even greater attention and resources in the future. Related to this issue is the perceived need for housing which would enable the elderly to remain in Eastham, retain interests and friends, yet reduce expenses, and provide some protections, or assistance as needed. We recommend that the feasibility for such a facility be seriously studied

### Health Care

Lack of medical insurance, underinsurance, and /or inability to keep up insurance payments leads to the patient's reluctance to seek timely service. Indeed most insurance does not cover preventive services, and comes into force only when there is a clear diagnosis and even then may pay only a portion of the charges. We now read of 20% or more premium increases required of employers providing health benefits and even higher for individuals seeking their own coverage. For families it can amount to hundreds of dollars monthly, so we can expect an ever growing population without insurance. The town can't fix this, but could begin to take stock of what the residents need and consider the possibility of appropriate public health preventive measures.

The Eastham Rescue Squad provides efficient, competent and sympathetic service to our residents in emergencies. They also respond to requests for blood pressure monitoring and first aid. The question arises to what extent emergency visits to Hyannis could be avoided if affordable routine health care was available.

The adequacy of health care has been touched on throughout this report. Important steps have begun to be taken on a state wide basis to help assure that there is access to health care for all citizens. Mass Health is now available to almost all children of low and moderate income levels, through a sliding scale premium provision. There is also an important state Elder Pharmacy Program for those eligible. In addition a special grant has enabled the development of the Healthy Connections Program which helps connect residents to insurances as well as other forms of assistance. The major success story of the decade has been in the opening of the dental clinic in Harwich, described earlier. Currently some medical professionals also refuse to accept Mass Health patients. The CHNAP study undertaken 5 years ago clearly disclosed the problems facing the poor and uninsured. Implementation is slow, but does move ahead.

There has always been great need for more physicians in the lower cape. There has been an increase in more local resources in recent years. Cape Cod Healthcare has purchased the former Medcenter Five building in Harwich and it now houses medical offices, including some specialties and lab services, thus eliminating the long trip to Hyannis. However these services are available to the insured and private paying population only. The Outer Cape Health Services has now opened an office in Orleans in addition to the office in Wellfleet which serves many Eastham residents. Outer Cape Health Service turns no one away and provides medical attention regardless of ability to pay. It is in the process of expanding the Orleans office. This can be a major affordable resource for all Eastham residents as well as the uninsured and Mass Health patient. Outer Cape is also developing a specialized geriatric service. Town assistance to help defray the cost of service to Eastham residents above what is available through the state free care pool is recommended.

### Transportation

This continues to be a major problem for all residents, because we live in a semi-rural area where public transportation is limited to bus routes on Rte 6 from Provincetown to Hyannis several times a day. The B-bus is very helpful, but there are problems with scheduling and frequency of service. Fortunately some improvements have made it possible to get shuttle service from the Plymouth Brockton bus to the hospital in Hyannis, and there are newer efforts to join the towns in a limited service to hospital appointments in Boston. There is hope for the future in the Transportation Task Force plans announced in the fall of 2000. In the meantime, local effort to meet local needs must be expanded.

Availability of Human Services

*Agencies funded fully or partially through the Town of Eastham as of 2001:*

Eastham Rescue Squad - funded through the Eastham Fire Department, the Rescue Squad provides prompt, competent and sympathetic services in case of medical emergency, including transportation to Cape Cod Hospital.

Eastham Council on Aging - funded through the Town budget, The Eastham Council maintains a variety of social programming and services and provides transportation vans. A specialized Day Program is also available for elderly in need.

The Recreation Commission - the Commission oversees a Day Camp during the summer months and a year-round athletic program for children and youth.

Eastham Elementary School and Nauset Regional School District

Eastham Health Agent and Board of Health

Eastham Library

Visiting Nurses Association

*Agencies providing services through Town contracts for partial funding as of 2001*

Bayview Associates (formerly Lower Cape Human Services) - provides clinical treatment to children and adults with mental health and personal adjustment problems.

Cape Cod Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence - provides counseling and a drop-in center, with an emphasis on services for needy clients.

Cape Cod Children's Place - provides day care for children from ages 2 to 5, and offers other family support services and referrals.

Cape Cod Human Services - Provides counseling and other mental health services for children and adults.

Consumers Assistance Council - provides information and assistance in dealing with fraud and other consumer problems, as an outreach program of the State Attorney General's office.

Eastham Committee for Early Childhood - provides after-school programs for Eastham children.

Independence House - provides crisis intervention, emergency shelter, counseling and advocacy for battered women and their children, and for victims of sexual abuse

Interfaith Council for the Homeless of Lower Cape Cod - provides advocacy and counseling to homeless individuals and families and those threatened with losing their homes.

Legal Services of Cape Cod and the Islands - provides free legal advice and representation on significant civil law (non-criminal) issues to low income individuals of all ages, and to the elderly without income limitations.

Lower Cape Outreach Council - provides emergency aid of food, clothing and help with rent payments, etc. to individuals and families in financial crisis.

Mass Appeal - provides a free clothing shop and referral services, and sponsors Project Serve, a food program at nominal cost.

Nauset Inc. - operates a sheltered workshop providing job training and placement for developmentally disabled individuals aged 22 years and older.

Provincetown AIDS Support Group - provides support services, including counseling, meals, housing advocacy, etc. for AIDS patients and their families.



Sight Loss Services - assists individuals of all ages coping with gradual losses of sight. Provides information support, adaptive aids and instruction to enable clients to remain independent and in their own homes.

Other human services (without Town funding) are available to Eastham residents. For a comprehensive list of organizations available to Lower Cape residents see Directory of Preventive Services, issued by the Lower/Outer Cape Health and Human Services Coalition.

## **Implementation**

### Recommended Town Actions

The Eastham Human Services Committee recommends the following:

- Agencies providing Human Services should report to the town annually concerning changing needs.
- The Human Services Advisory Committee should continue to interview agency representatives on needs of town residents served, and survey town officials, school program administrators and other organizations' leaders for information on human service needs.
- The Town should form a Children's/Youth Council to address needs for service and to help to coordinate existing and future programs.
- Provision of additional day care and summer programming for children and youth.
- Development of a consistent and adequately funded base to assure stability for after school programs.
- Focus on outreach to the elderly isolated residents and mechanisms to bring them into community activities.
- Support for both sufficient preventive and acute care medical services for Eastham residents with special attention to the needs of the uninsured population.
- Support for organizations providing emergency assistance and active advocacy for families and individuals who are now homeless or are at risk of losing their homes or are now homeless.

The Advisory Committee recognizes the larger issues which impact our residents' welfare and quality of life, principally adequate affordable housing and transportation. These are addressed elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, and we add our voice to the plea for action to meet the urgency of these problems.

See "Human Services" in the Implementation Schedule.

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